

[Fred C. Scarborough]

[?] S241 - LA DUP

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St

DATE Sept. 26, 1938; Sept 30, 1938 SUBJECT Folklore, American

1. Name and address of informant Fred C. Scarborough Robbers Cave, 11th & High Sts.
2. Date and time of interview Sept 26, 8-11 p.m.; Sept 30, 4-6:30p.m. Oct. 13, 3-5:30 p.m.
3. Place of interview In the cave and residence
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant None.
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you None
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc. First interview took place in the Cave in the various caverns. The dwelling house stands near the entrance to cave, on an elevation. [A?] low rambling structure, it somewhat resembles a western ranch house. Very nicely furnished and refined. The cave of course is a point of interest and it visited by thousands of people yearly who hold [picnics?], wienie roasts, suppers and parties in its depths.

Mr. and Mrs. Scarborough raisebirds and fish both as hobby and commercially. [???

FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

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DATE Sept 26-38; Sept 30 SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Fred C. Scarborough Robbers Cave 11th & High St. Lincoln, Neb.

1. Ancestry English Quaker

2. Place and date of birth Salem, Iowa, Oct 10, 1877

3. Family Wife living, Father dead.

4. Place lived in, with dates Salem, Iowa, 1877 to 1884 Frontier Co. Nebr. 1884, Oxford, Nebr. 1890 to 1900 Railroaded McCook-Denver 1900 to 1920 to date

5. Education, with dates Grade school Mt. Pleasant, Ia. 1882-83 Country school, Frontier Co. Neb. 1883 to 1890 Oxford, Neb. 1890 to 1894. Graduated from high school in 1894.

6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates.

Seargant in U. S. army, Spanish War [1896?] to 1900. Railroad trainman 1900 to 1920, conductor, C. B. & [Q?].

7. Special skills and interests

Operated cave property 1920 to date, raising birds, chickens, and fish, as a hobby and commercially.

8. Community and religious activities.

No particular activities except lodges.

9. Description of informant. Medium height, trifle stout. Regular features, smiling expression, [ruddy?] complexion, very pleasing personality and

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10. Other points gained in interview

[Is?] congenial yet firm in a [business?] way. Has many of the characteristics of a railroad trainman, somewhat detached, and very direct. [With?] executive ability. Very intelligent, observing and has an analytical mind and imagination. Enthusiastic as to the cave and takes great pride in it as well as the birds and fish. Is not boresome however.

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Harold J. Moss ADDRESS 6934 Francis St.

DATE Sept 26, 30, 38. SUBJECT Folklore

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Fred C. Scarborough, 11th & High St. Lincoln, Nebr.

Our family, ancestors, originally English lived in the United States before the Revolutionary War. This old Masonic letter, is dated 1763. The original hand seal of wax is still attached.

A letter such as this was probably carried when one traveled to another place, much the same as identification cards are used today.

Father's great grandfather John Scarborough lived in Orleans County N. York, at this time. His father was killed in 1860 in his own yard, upon his return from delivering a group of runaway slaves to the next depot, near Keokuk Iowa. He had a blind cellar dug to one side of the house. It was entered by pulling out a dummy table from the wall.

These runaway slaves would be kept there a while and then moved on to the next depot. My father was a small boy at that time eight years old but he used to carry messages, through the timber to friendly forces.

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Robbers Cave is located near the old town of Lancaster, Nebraska, and was at one time suppose to be a headquarters for outlaws and criminals, who used this place as a hideout. It is even connected up with Pawnee Indian Spirit Legends, tho' probably visited only by the medicine men and chiefs. Along about 1879 the entrance to cave was through the basement, of an old dance hall and sporting house, which stood here. This place was [?] as a thieves hangout and in 1863

The Anti Horse Thief Association burned it down. The fire was set by white caps.

Frank Rawlins, who drove a hack for 'the White Elephant' Livery Barn in Lincoln used to drive a 'mr. Howard' out here often. Some thought this 'mr. Howard' was 'Jesse James!

This may have been. When we cleaned the cave we found an old carving. 'A thief and a coward Was Mr. Howard But he laid as Jesse James in his grave.'

The first cavern in the cave was fixed with 16 stalls. In cleaning out this cavern, we found 244 old rusty horseshoes. Everything was screened and we had a bushel basket of broken knife blades, buckles, bayonets, and other things. In the larger cavern they carved out the figure head of the Iron Sphinx.

This was a sort of shrine in some of the rituals of the University Students of those days.

The cave was used as a brewery and was noted for its fine water out of the old well shaft and its never changing temperature of 56. We have found many old bones imbedded in the sandstone wall of the caverns and also in excavating the floors.

Many old lead slugs were dug up in one part of the lower cavern which were crude. Counterfeits of [\$1.00?] and 50¢ coins.

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The cave was, we believe, the hideout of counterfeiters in the early days. The first cow brand used in Nebraska is cut out into the walls. [?] The J. E. T. J. E. THOMPSON "JET" Brand

In 1908 and old cowhand visited the cave and claimed this was one of the most important brands ever used in Nebraska and he said, the first.

Mr father was a Quaker and attended Quaker College in Salem Iowa. He came to Nebraska in 1884 and settled near Cambridge. He was interested in decoration work for expositions thru'out the country.

He acquired title to the cave about 1906 and started to clean them out for the purpose of raising mushrooms. But the people began to gossip and thought he was digging for buried treasure. They came in crowds to watch him and his operations. They believed anyway that there was treasure buried about the cave. However nothing of the sort was ever found though that could be established. There is little doubt but what things of value were concealed in some way here and probably today if one knew where to explore some part of the takings of early outlaws could be uncovered.

There is a story about some boys from the boys home just north of here, [?] about 1904 got into the cave one day and dug around. They returned to the home that night and later it was told about that they some gold watches, breast pins and gold pieces. These were supposed to have been taken from them by the attendants or overseer at the home, but there is nothing to prove any of this.

I have notices, as well as other, something which we always associated with Nebraska Life. The people here always whistle a great deal. We think that it was because of some local condition. Sometimes they could whistle good tunes and even better opera music and sometimes they just whistled without much purpose only to whistle.

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People have said this was because of the wind always blowing in Nebraska with a whistling sound, caused the people to imitate it.

But also there was lots of dust in the air and maybe they could whistle and thus relive themselves without inhaling the dust.

It is likely that only Pawnee Medicine Men and chiefs came to this cave. The Indians in the tribal or colony ranks would hardly dare to venture near the spirit world. And then any human mostly goes to the shrine and worships his God or sacred place, only when adversity comes to him. In time of trouble men always turn to their God, or mother for help. When things run smooth, they grow more or less indifferent and independent.

My father went to Quaker College ([?]) at Salem Iowa. He married at Salem in 1876, May Wilmuth. They came to Nebraska in 1884, and finally took over this old historic cave. He was how important as a Nebraska Historical [Land Mark?] it was and was active in research work to gather data about it, It had served as a refuge in time of storm, winter blizzards, Indian hostilities and while man depredations.

As people came to know of it, it became a point of great interest as it presents still the atmosphere and surroundings of the romantic early days and one can in its cavernous depths be carried back and relive the dramatic moments of those earlier days.

Such life was lived at this spot, which can only be imagined.

The people as a group living near here had numerous ideas about this opening into the earth and were possessed of varying emotions concerning it.

Today it is still a place [??] for entertainment, education, and traditional inspiration.

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One sort of can get the feel of those years, long past and something of the drama of that pioneer wild west life.